

**Crozet Community Advisory Council – Minutes**  
**Thursday, December 19, 2013 from 7:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.**

**CCAC members present:** Meg Holden (Chair), Meg West, Brenda Plantz, Bill Schrader, John Savage, George Barlow, Leslie Burns, Nancy Virginia Bain, Ann Mallek (Board of Supervisors), Mary Gallo, Kim Guenther, Tom Loach (Planning Commission), Beth Bassett, Jennie More

**CCAC members absent:** Phil Best

**Public attendees:** Frank Stoner, Mike Marshall, Brian Wheeler, Chris Holden, Jim Duncan

**Chair Meg Holden called the meeting to order at 7:01 p.m.**

- 1. Agenda Review** (Meg Holden – CCAC chair): Meg Holden distributed the agenda, reviewed it with the council and welcomed any additions. Members of the council introduced themselves.
- 2. Approval of Minutes from November 21, 2013 meeting:** Minutes were not available and will be presented at the January meeting.
- 3. Public Comment:** Meg Holden greeted our visitors and encouraged public comments or questions now or at any time during the meeting.
- 4. Presentation By Frank Stoner.** Mr. Stoner introduced himself and asked that this meeting be a dialogue and not a presentation, encouraging attendees to ask questions and give opinions. He explained that he is from a small town of about 8,000 people in western Pennsylvania, came to our area in 1983 and started in the development field shortly thereafter. He developed: student condominiums around UVA, Queen Charlotte square, Kegler’s of Charlottesville, Belmont Lofts (a condo project), and several residential communities with Stonehaus. He is now redeveloping the old sewage treatment plant in Charlottesville to a neighborhood. Mr. Stoner said that brownfield development is important to him, and so Barnes is a good opportunity for him. He introduced his partner at Milestone, L. J. Lopez, and explained that Milestone is a development services company, sometimes working for an investor or a civic group, etc. They worked on the redevelopment for Jefferson School, where nine non-profits are now located. Milestone provides management expertise, and relies on engineers, architects and other experts; his job is to assemble the right group.

Barnes is a complicated project with railroad and environmental issues, and many “moving parts.” The property went under contract in September and is currently owned by a limited liability company that is owned by Union First Market Bank. He negotiated for six months to get the property rezoned and planned in the right way and to make it work he needs County and community support. Is there a consensus of the CCAC as to the vision for downtown? He presented a Powerpoint showing images from similar places, with similar challenges and opportunities, followed by demographic information for the Crozet area. Mr. Stoner says that the last ten years is the most interesting part, in which median household income, population and home values have all doubled (the study area being generally the master plan boundaries to some

degree). Projections are that in 2020 the population will be 8,000, and 12,000 in 2030. He acknowledged some doubt about these numbers. Mr. Stoner reiterated his desire for input on this, and listed several questions about the vision for Crozet.

Brenda asked why he had already gone to the Planning Commission with zoning requests. Mr. Stoner said that he went to Wayne Cilimberg, not specifically for this property, but to address a perceived flaw in the Downtown Crozet Zoning District (DCD) code as written, and so the change would apply to all properties in the DCD. The County said that such a change could be implemented by Zoning Text Amendment (ZTA). The Planning Commission reviewed this change. The issue was that one could build a single family home anywhere in DCD without commercial use in it (so that existing properties would not be nonconforming), but one could not build attached units without commercial use. To build attached units without commercial uses will require a special use permit (SUP). Mr. Stoner said that with the ZTA, the mixed use of the development is still the most important thing. Meg H. said that it is important that there be a commercial center to Crozet and if we don't have that, such uses will be lost to Old Trail and the Route 250 corridor. This has been the CCAC's biggest concern: how to protect and grow the commercial center and keep employment there. One commenter noted that "blue collar" businesses are welcome on the fringes, but not inside the county. Tom noted that there is flex space set aside in downtown for other commercial uses; it is indeed there. There is also light industrial for those uses.

Mr. Stoner says that it is good for him to get an idea of what the development should look like. What should the commercial area in the downtown look like? What retailers? What other businesses? He presented a list of what he thinks the character is like. Chris Holden noted that the Barnes tract is a large site and a huge portion of downtown, so it needs to be developed properly. The development should honor the past, keeping the small town character and locally owned small businesses, allowing residents to work in Crozet. Buildings should not be monolithic. It was noted that the development should have a pedestrian feel to it. Uses should reflect Crozet's strong arts community and perhaps this could be a permanent draw, in concert with wineries and breweries. Mr. Stoner asked Ann about a Virginia Wine Center that he read about, and whether this was something that could be in Crozet. Ann noted that the current thinking is that this would be located closer to Monticello but perhaps some aspect of it could be out here. Another possibility is a chemistry lab to work with the wineries. Ann says that the scenery and mountains should be taken into account, remembering that people are tuned in to the outdoors (similar to some communities in the West, including Boulder and Marin, as noted by Leslie). Agribusiness and wineries are commercial drivers, as are outdoor pursuits with the Skyline Drive and Shenandoah National Park nearby. Further, the development should have niches and gathering places with a variety of architectural styles. It was noted that the parking situation makes it hard to make it look organically grown here. The development should maintain that sense of place and space and that will attract visitors here. In line with our agrarian roots, perhaps a feed store is possible, and another boutique hotel would be a good addition.

A comment from the audience was made that we want mixed use where residents can be employed, and provide for the needs of visitors too. It is also important to have places for young people to hang out (in addition to the great response at the new library). More community meeting spaces are needed for arts, music and exhibitions. There should be retail and other

employment types there too, which encourage pedestrian uses. Another public comment was made that we should be mindful of European towns that have many spaces for the public to gather. Mr. Stoner should integrate the Square with the proposed development. Having apartments near business areas keeps the whole area safer and more vibrant.

A member asked what Mr. Stoner's vision was. He says it is evolving and that is why he is here. This is iterative. He then showed images of other places, including his hometown in Pennsylvania; Rothenburg, Germany; and Aguas Calientes, Peru, at the base of Machu Picchu where the railroad runs right through town. He said that one big flaw in the district is lack of connectivity around the railroad tracks. There might be an opportunity for a crossing at east end of the Barnes property, but this would be a tight fit. He also showed similar towns in Virginia, such as Warrenton, which has similar demographics, but noted that we are maybe ten years from Warrenton's size (it's also a county seat, close to a big metro area, and has a large inventory of historic buildings), and Smithfield with 8,100 people. He then showed Gettysburg, Pennsylvania with 7,800 people; Dallas, Oregon; and Baraboo, Wisconsin, with 12,000 people. Mr. Stoner asked if Crozet should have a website, and recommended that we look at the Locust, North Carolina website.

There are challenges and opportunities. Mr. Stoner said that the economics of small town development are difficult and gave us the example of a building he was renovating in Lexington, Virginia where the existing retail tenants were paying rents well below market. Raising rent slightly caused many to leave. The tenants were paying \$4.50 per square foot and he was trying to get to \$7.50; half departed at \$6. If building new today, the cost of construction puts you at needing \$18 to \$22 per square foot to pay for it.

Mr. Stoner said that one issue he faces is that residential use above retail is hard to underwrite from a banking perspective. Stonefield was supposed to be mixed use, with residential over commercial, and they ended up mixing uses horizontally and not vertically. Old Trail has developed verticality, with residential over commercial space. As renewals come up, see if the uses stay the same. Because of this, Mr. Stoner says that he needs to be able to build townhouses without commercial below. He believes there is demand for rentals in Crozet. He also noted that sometimes residential above commercial is a problem because some people don't want to live over some uses (such as restaurants). Tom says mixed use works in some places, but they often are much bigger. Light rail would of course help this but even bus service could cost in the millions. Again, he noted that access is an issue for buses to this site, and circulation is a big problem. Additional access roads are going to be challenging to install, but we need better access from 240 to 250, and a railroad crossing would be great. CCAC noted that we need to make more residences in walking distance from downtown.

Mr. Stoner said that Crozet will grow and that this is a rare transformational development opportunity, but he needs support from the community to make this work.

Mr. Stoner then showed us several iterations of the master plan for the property. Some were more monolithic than others. He noted that the CSX property intrudes into this site and they have reached out to the railroad to buy or lease the land, which would open up more commercial space. Lastly he showed us the latest plan, which puts commercial near the Square now, and has

a large crossroads there. It was recommended that he have outdoor dining areas, benches, etc. for spill out into the square, and that the buildings bring some enclosure to the square. The residential density would decrease out to the fringes. The plan showed 75-80 residential units. He said he wants it to feel like a small town main street. It was asked whether he would start with the residential development and if this use would creep into the commercial. He responded that the most significant control against this is the SUP process, which is where people would object. The sequence would be to put roads in first, then start on the residential area and the Square and work inwards. He noted that it is necessary to sell residential properties in order to pay for the roads, which will cost between \$1.8M and \$2.4M. He said that residential proffers will be a deal breaker for them. "Rooftops pay for the road." How would this be balanced if SUPs are requested for first floor residential? Tom explained that this is the process to work this out. There are some by right divisions that aren't proffered, and affordable cost units don't count. It was noted that there is some value in having residential uses on the first floor, but how will these be blended into surrounding neighborhoods? This can become a horizontal rather than vertical mix of uses.

An audience member asked if there will be trails to get to Crozet from The Meadows area? This would not be part of this plan. Generally the plan moves from commercial uses near the square to dense residential/corporate offices to single family on the outer parts of the property. How much residential use is needed to start the project? Mr. Stoner said that this is not clear yet because they don't know road and demolition costs, but should have a grip on these in three weeks. He said that he needs to have both to make this work; he needs residential to support the commercial. He said that they have not determined the residential price points yet, but there are affordability requirements in the code. He recognized the need for affordable housing, but noted that infrastructure costs have a profound effect on the cost of the residences. In addition, it is difficult to get financing these days because loan to value ratios are 35-40% and banks still are reluctant. He estimated the population of the development would be around 500 residents. Population would depend on how high they go with the mixed use buildings. When a comment was made about the loss of residential area in downtown Ann noted that we have been asking that commercial uses be preserved or grown.

Timing: The ZTA passed a week ago and will be resubmitted in January. Mr. Stoner said that they would not submit a detailed site plan but would submit general plan similar to what he showed us and everything would be by right after that. The review process through the Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors would run until August and then the hard work starts. He anticipates a lot of engagement to get ideas, attract commercial users, and populate the residential area. CCAC members asked that he come back with the plans and show us and he said that he wants to do that. He said that he cannot fight the community, but instead wants to get everyone excited and seek cooperation through the process. He said that they would digest the comments and the plan will change.

Leslie asked about the possibility of a college annex here, with UVA, Piedmont or Mary Baldwin. Health care is also a possibility, but there are already a number of established offices in Crozet, although an urgent care facility would be good. A martial arts or dance studio was also suggested. We were encouraged to ask friends and neighbors about what we need in Crozet

and send thoughts to Mr. Stoner. Mr. Stoner closed by showing images of what the project could look like in the future.

**5. Announcements:** None.

**6. Future Agenda Items:** None.

**Adjourned at 9:22 p.m. on a motion by Barlow seconded by Savage.**

George Barlow  
Secretary